Import of Rice Bran

2955. SHRI S. AGNIRAJ: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that State like Tamil Nadu are facing shortage of Rice Bran to produce Palm Oil for local consumption and exports;

(b) what steps are being taken for direct import of this items under OGL; and

(c) whether any steps are being taken for importing Rice Bran under zero duty, under OGL to benefit the users of Rice Bran to produce Palm Oil?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (b) Rice Bran raw has been made freely importable with effect from 31.3.99.

(c) There is no proposal, at present for allowing free import of rice bran at zero duty.

Involvement of State Governments to Boost Exports

2956. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Union Government have formulated a scheme to involve the State Governments in its efforts to boost exports;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) by when the scheme is likely to be finalised;

(d) whether any incentive would be given to the State Governments for this purpose; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) to (e) The Centre seeks participation of States in export promotion by provision of adequate and quality infrastructure, input support, relief from imposts, removal of procedural and other constraints etc. States arc also consulted on matters which arc specific to them. In the Exim policy there is a provision to recognise one agency of the State Government as Export House in relaxation of the criterion.

A scheme was launched in 1993-94 under which 19 Export Promotion Industrial Parks (EPIP) have been set up in different States all over the country. A total sum of Rs. 133.26 crores has been released so far for the approved EPIPs.

A Critical Infrastructure Balance scheme is also being implemented by the Ministry of Commerce under which assistance is provided to States and their ageniecs for strengthening the infrastructure and removal of bottlenecks to exports. An amount of Rs. 100.93 Crores has been sanctioned so far under the scheme far a total number of 43 projects/ works.

Agricultural and Processed Food Export Development Authority has opened virtual offices with the assistance of State Government departments/agencies, in Kerala, Punjab, Orissa, Tripura, Manipur and Jammu & Kashmir to facilitate dissemination of information regarding its schemes and projects. A flower auction centre is proposed to be set up at Bangalore with the assistance of designated agency of the Government of Kerala.

Free Trade Zones

2957. SHRI SATISHCHANDRA SITARAM PRADHAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to set up free trade zones in the country?

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?